

ZEN SOURCEBOOK

*Traditional Documents from
China, Korea, and Japan*

Edited by Stephen Addiss
With Stanley Lombardo and Judith Roitman

Introduction by Paula Arai

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Huang-po (died c. 850)

Transmission of Mind (excerpts)

Huang-po (Japanese: *Obaku*) lived two generations after Hui-neng, during an era in which a single generational line of Patriarchs no longer sufficed for the spread of Zen in China. His name as a monk was Hsi-yun, but like several other early Masters, he is better known for the name of the mountain where he taught, below Vulture Peak on Mount Huang Po.

Born in Fuchou, Huang-po was said to have had a large protruding forehead that was described as a "great pearl." He entered a monastery in Fuchou in his youth; he then traveled to practice at Mount T'ien-t'ai, and also studied with Nan-yang in the capital of Ch'ang-an. One significant anecdote remains from a visit Huang-po made to the Master Nan-ch'uan; when asked to recite an "Ode of the Ox-Herd," Huang-po simply replied, "I am my own teacher right here."

We can be grateful to the scholar-official P'ei Hsiu for recording the teachings of Huang-po, whom he so revered that he had his son become a novice to study with the Master. In the year 843, when P'ei was governing Wang-lin Prefecture, he built the Lung Hsing Monastery and invited Huang-po to come and teach. During this visit P'ei also stayed at the monastery and became Huang-po's pupil; after the Master left, P'ei recorded the teachings he had heard. Since P'ei was known as a good scholar, and because he gave the manuscript to two monks who were pupils of Huang-po to check, we can assume that these writings accurately represent the teachings of the Master. P'ei then published his manuscript in the year 858, a few years after the death of Huang-po. The first part of the text consists of short sermons and excerpts from sermons, while the second section represents further teachings as well as answers to questions that the Master was asked by his followers; we present excerpts from both sections.

According to P'ei Hsu's preface, Huang-po was in a direct line of spiritual lineage from Hui-neng and taught the doctrine of "one mind," in which mind and substance are both void. By describing the mind as "unborn," Huang-po predates Bankei (see Chapter 23) by nine hundred years, and by stressing that even the sutras are only temporary remedies, he gives precedence to actual

experience. But what is this experience? Huang-po makes clear that it is neither reverential nor intellectual; by his statement that even conceiving of a Buddha makes us obstructed by that Buddha, he urges us to "put mental activity to rest."

There are many important passages in the following text. For example, as a major Master who transmitted Hui-neng's "sudden enlightenment" tradition for later generations, Huang-po teaches that since "there's never been a single thing," we must enter the Way with "the suddenness of a knife-thrust." Huang-po refers to the historical Buddha as Tathagata ("thus come"), but he considers Buddha-nature as mind (the same character can also mean "heart").

Huang-po's most important pupil was Lin-chi, who tells the story of his interactions with Huang-po in the following section. Since the Lin-chi (Japanese: *Rinzai*) School survives as one of the most important Zen traditions, we can regard Huang-po as its spiritual ancestor, and, indeed, his powerful and sharply focused teachings are still vital in the transmission of Zen training. In addition, the Chinese monks who emigrated to Japan in the mid-seventeenth century became a sect known in Japan as *Obaku*.

When a sudden flash of thought occurs in your mind and you recognize it for a dream or an illusion, then you can enter into the state reached by the Buddhas of the past—not that the Buddhas of the past really exist, or that the Buddhas of the future have not yet come into existence. Above all, have no longing to become a future Buddha; your sole concern should be, as thought succeeds thought, to avoid clinging to any of them.

If a Buddha arises, do not think of him as "enlightened" or "deluded," "good" or "evil." Hasten to rid yourself of any desire to cling to him. Cut him off in the twinkling of an eye! On no account seek to hold him fast, for a thousand locks could not stay him, nor a hundred thousand feet of rope bind him. This being so, valiantly strive to banish and annihilate him.

I will now make luminously clear how to set about being rid of that Buddha. Consider the sunlight. You may say it is near, yet if you follow it from world to world you will never catch it in your hands. Then you may describe it as far away and, lo, you will see it just before your eyes. Follow it and, behold, it escapes you; run from it and it follows you close. You can neither possess it nor have done with it. From this example you can understand how it is with the true Nature of all things and, henceforth, there will be no need to grieve or to worry about such things.

From *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*, translated by John Blofeld (New York: Grove Press, 1958). Reprinted by permission of The Estate of John Blofeld and Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Thus all the visible universe is the Buddha; so are all sounds; hold fast to one principle and all the others are identical. On seeing one thing, you see all. On perceiving any individual's mind, you are perceiving all Mind. Obtain a glimpse of one way and all ways are embraced in your vision, for there is nowhere at all which is devoid of the Way. When your glance falls upon a grain of dust, what you see is identical with all the vast world-systems with their great rivers and mighty hills. To gaze upon a drop of water is to behold the nature of all the waters of the universe. Moreover, in thus contemplating the totality of phenomena, you are contemplating the totality of Mind. All these phenomena are intrinsically void and yet this Mind with which they are identical is no mere nothingness. By this I mean that it does exist, but in a way too marvelous for us to comprehend. It is an existence which is no existence, a non-existence which is nevertheless existence.

The phenomenal universe and Nirvana, activity and motionless placidity—all are of one substance. By saying that they are all of one substance, we mean that their names and forms, their existence and non-existence, are void. The great world-systems, uncountable as Ganga's sands, are in truth comprised in the one boundless void. Then where can there be Buddhas who deliver or sentient beings to be delivered? When the true nature of all things that "exist" is an identical Thusness, how can such distinctions have any reality? To use the symbol of the closed fist: when it is opened, all beings—both gods and men—will perceive there is not a single thing inside. Therefore is it written, "There's never been a single thing; then where's the defiling dust to cling?" If "there's never been a single thing," past, present and future are meaningless. So those who seek the Way must enter it with the suddenness of a knife-thrust. Full understanding of this must come before they can enter.

Whatever Mind is, so also are phenomena—both are equally real and partake equally of the Dharma-Nature, which hangs in the void. He who receives an intuition of this truth has become a Buddha and attained to the Dharma. No listening, no knowing, no sound, no track, no trace—make yourselves thus and you will be scarcely less than neighbors of Bodhidharma!

Q: What is implied by "seeing into the real Nature"?

A: That Nature and your perception of it are one. You cannot use it to see something over and above itself. That Nature and your hearing of it are one. You cannot use it to hear something over and above itself. If you form a concept of the true nature of anything as being visible or audible, you allow a dharma of distinction to arise.

You people still conceive of Mind as existing or not existing, as pure or defiled, as something to be studied in the way that one studies a piece of

categorical knowledge, or as a concept—any of these definitions is sufficient to throw you back into the endless round of birth and death. The man who perceives things always wants to identify them, to get a hold on them. Those who use their minds like eyes in this way are sure to suppose that progress is a matter of stages. If you are that kind of person, you are as far from the truth as earth is far from heaven. Why this talk of "seeing into your own nature"?

If, as thought succeeds thought, you go on seeking for wisdom outside yourselves, then there is a continual process of thoughts arising, dying away and being succeeded by others.

The existence of things as separate entities and not as separate entities are both dualistic concepts. As Bodhidharma said: "There are separate entities and there are not, but at the same time they are neither the one nor the other, for relativity is transient." A man drinking water knows well enough if it is cold or warm. Whether you be walking or sitting, you must restrain all discriminatory thoughts from one moment to the next. If you do not, you will never escape the chain of rebirth.

Only when your minds cease dwelling upon anything whatsoever will you come to an understanding of the true way of Zen. I may express it thus—the way of the Buddhas flourishes in a mind utterly freed from conceptual thought processes, while discrimination between this and that gives birth to a legion of demons!

Q: But how can we prevent ourselves from falling into the error of making distinctions between this and that?

A: By realizing that, although you eat the whole day through, no single grain has passed your lips; and that a day's journey has not taken you a single step forward—also by uniformly abstaining from such notions as "self" and "other." Do not permit the events of your daily lives to bind you, but never withdraw yourselves from them. Only by acting thus can you earn the title of "A Liberated One."

The Master said to me: All the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the One Mind, beside which nothing exists. This Mind, which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible. It is not green nor yellow, and has neither form nor appearance. It does not belong to the categories of things which exist or do not exist, nor can it be thought of in terms of new or old. It is neither long nor short, big nor small, for it transcends all limits, measures, names, traces and comparisons. It is that which you see before you—begin to reason about it and you at once fall into error. It is like the boundless void which cannot be fathomed or measured. The One Mind alone is the Buddha, and there is no distinction between the Buddha and sentient things but that sentient beings are attached to forms and so seek

externally for Buddhahood. By their very seeking they lose it, for that is using the Buddha to seek for the Buddha and using mind to grasp Mind. Even though they do their utmost for a full aeon, they will not be able to attain to it. They do not know that, if they put a stop to conceptual thought and forget their anxiety, the Buddha will appear before them, for this Mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is all living beings. It is not the less for being manifested in ordinary beings, nor is it greater for being manifested in the Buddhas.

Mind is like the void in which there is no confusion or evil, as when the sun wheels through it shining upon the four corners of the world. For, when the sun rises and illuminates the whole earth, the void gains not in brilliance; and, when the sun sets, the void does not darken. The phenomena of light and dark alternate with each other, but the nature of the void remains unchanged. So it is with the Mind of the Buddha and of sentient beings. If you look upon the Buddha as presenting a pure, bright or Enlightened appearance, or upon sentient beings as presenting a foul, dark or mortal-seeming appearance, these conceptions resulting from attachment to form will keep you from supreme knowledge, even after the passing of as many aeons as there are sands in the Ganges. There is only the One Mind and not a particle of anything else on which to lay hold, for this Mind is the Buddha. If you students of the Way do not awake to this Mind substance, you will overlay Mind with conceptual thought, you will seek the Buddha outside yourselves, and you will remain attached to forms, pious practices and so on, all of which are harmful and not at all the way to supreme knowledge.

This Mind is no mind of conceptual thought and it is completely detached from form. So Buddhas and sentient beings do not differ at all. If you can only rid yourselves of conceptual thought, you will have accomplished everything. But if you students of the Way do not rid yourselves of conceptual thought in a flash, even though you strive for aeon after aeon, you will never accomplish it.

The building up of good and evil both involve attachment to form. . . . Suppose a warrior, forgetting that he was already wearing his pearl on his forehead, were to seek for it elsewhere, he could travel the whole world without finding it. But if someone who knew what was wrong were to point it out to him, the warrior would immediately realize that the pearl had been there all the time. So, if you students of the Way are mistaken about your own real Mind, not recognizing that it is the Buddha, you will consequently look for him elsewhere, indulging in various achievements and practices and expecting to attain realization by such graduated practices. But, even after aeons of diligent searching, you will not be able to attain to the Way.

Our original Buddha-Nature is, in highest truth, devoid of any atom of objectivity. It is void, omnipresent, silent, pure; it is glorious and mysterious

peaceful joy—and that is all. Enter deeply into it by awaking to it yourself. That which is before you is it, in all its fullness, utterly complete. There is naught beside. Even if you go through all the stages of a Bodhisattva's progress towards Buddhahood, one by one; when at last, in a single flash, you attain to full realization, you will only be realizing the Buddha-Nature which has been with you all the time; and by all the foregoing stages you will have added to it nothing at all.

This pure Mind, the source of everything, shines forever and on all with the brilliance of its own perfection. But the people of the world do not awake to it, regarding only that which sees, hears, feels and knows as mind. Blinded by their own sight, hearing, feeling and knowing, they do not perceive the spiritual brilliance of the source-substance. If they would only eliminate all conceptual thought in a flash, that source-substance would manifest itself like the sun ascending through the void and illuminating the whole universe without hindrance or bounds. Therefore, if you students of the Way seek to progress through seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing, when you are deprived of your perceptions, your way to Mind will be cut off and you will find nowhere to enter. Only realize that, though real Mind is expressed in these perceptions, it neither forms part of them nor is separate from them. You should not start reasoning from these perceptions, nor allow them to give rise to conceptual thought; yet nor should you seek the One Mind apart from them or abandon them in your pursuit of the Dharma. Do not keep them nor abandon them nor dwell in them nor cleave to them. Above, below and around you, all is spontaneously existing, for there is nowhere which is outside the Buddha-Mind.

Students of the Way should be sure that the four elements composing the body do not constitute the self; that the self is not an entity; and that it can be deduced from this that the body is neither self nor entity. Moreover, the five aggregates composing the mind (in the common sense) do not constitute either a self or an entity; hence, it can be deduced that the (so-called individual) mind is neither self nor entity. The six sense organs (including the brain) which, together with their six types of perception and the six kinds of objects of perception, constitute the sensory world, must be understood in the same way. Those eighteen aspects of sense are separately and together void. There is only Mind-Source, limitless in extent and of absolute purity.

Ordinary people look to their surroundings, while followers of the Way look to Mind, but the true Dharma is to forget them both. The former is easy enough, the latter very difficult. Men are afraid to forget their minds, fearing to fall through the Void with nothing to stay their fall. They do not know that the Void is not really void, but the realm of the real Dharma. This spiritually enlightening nature is without beginning, as ancient as the Void,

subject neither to birth nor to destruction, neither existing nor not existing, neither impure nor pure, neither clamorous nor silent, neither old nor young, occupying no space, having neither inside nor outside, size nor form, color nor sound. It cannot be looked for or sought, comprehended by wisdom or knowledge, explained in words, contacted materially or reached by meritorious achievement.

On the first day of the ninth moon, the Master said to me: From the time when the Great Master Bodhidharma arrived in China, he spoke only of the One Mind and transmitted only the one Dharma. He used the Buddha to transmit the Buddha, never speaking of any other Buddha. He used the Dharma to transmit the Dharma, never speaking of any other Dharma. That Dharma was the wordless Dharma, and that Buddha was the intangible Buddha, since they were in fact that Pure Mind which is the source of all things. This is the only truth; all else is false. . . . Nothing is born, nothing is destroyed. Away with your dualism, your likes and dislikes. Every single thing is just the One Mind. When you have perceived this, you will have mounted the Chariot of the Buddhas.

If an ordinary man, when he is about to die, could only see the five elements of consciousness as void; the four physical elements as not constituting an "I"; the real Mind as formless and neither coming nor going; his nature as something neither commencing at his birth nor perishing at his death, but as whole and motionless in its very depths; his Mind and environmental objects as one—if he could really accomplish this, he would receive Enlightenment in a flash. He would no longer be entangled by the Triple World; he would be a World-Transcendor. He would be without even the faintest tendency towards rebirth. If he should behold the glorious sight of all the Buddhas coming to welcome him, surrounded by every kind of gorgeous manifestation, he would feel no desire to approach them. If he should behold all sorts of horrific forms surrounding him, he would experience no terror. He would just be himself, oblivious of conceptual thought and one with the Absolute. He would have attained the state of unconditioned being. This, then, is the fundamental principle.

People are often hindered by environmental phenomena from perceiving Mind, and by individual events from perceiving underlying principles; so they often try to escape from environmental phenomena in order to still their minds, or to obscure events in order to retain their grasp of principles. They do not realize that this is merely to obscure phenomena with Mind, events with principles. Just let your minds become void and environmental phenomena will void themselves; let principles cease to stir and events will cease stirring of themselves. Many people are afraid to empty their minds lest they may plunge into the Void. They do not know that their own Mind is the void.

The canonical teachings of the Three Vehicles are just remedies for temporary needs. They were taught to meet such needs and so are of temporary value and differ one from another. If only this could be understood, there would be no more doubts about it. Above all it is essential not to select some particular teaching suited to a certain occasion, and, being impressed by its forming part of the written canon, regard it as an immutable concept. Why so? Because in truth there is no unalterable Dharma which the Tathagata could have preached. People of our sect would never argue that there could be such a thing. We just know how to put all mental activity to rest and thus achieve tranquility. We certainly do not begin by thinking things out and end up in perplexity.

Q: What is the Buddha?

A: Mind is the Buddha, while the cessation of conceptual thought is the Way. Once you stop arousing concepts and thinking in terms of existence and non-existence, long and short, other and self, active and passive, and suchlike, you will find that your Mind is intrinsically the Buddha, that the Buddha is intrinsically Mind, and that Mind resembles a void. Every day, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, and in all your speech, remain detached from everything within the sphere of phenomena. Whether you speak or merely blink an eye, let it be done with complete dispassion. This is not something which you can accomplish without effort, but when you reach the point of clinging to nothing whatever, you will be acting as the Buddhas act.

If you would spend all your time—walking, standing, sitting or lying down—learning to halt the concept-forming activities of your own mind, you could be sure of ultimately attaining the goal. Since your strength is insufficient, you might not be able to transcend *samsara* [the cycle of rebirths] by a single leap; but, after five or ten years, you would surely have made a good beginning and be able to make further progress spontaneously.

Anything possessing any signs is illusory. It is by perceiving that all signs are no signs that you perceive the Tathagata. "Buddha" and "sentient beings" are both your own false conceptions. It is because you do not know real Mind that you delude yourselves with such objective concepts. If you will conceive of a Buddha, you will be obstructed by that Buddha! And when you conceive of sentient beings, you will be obstructed by those beings. All such dualistic concepts as "ignorant" and "Enlightened," "pure" and "impure," are obstructions.

Q: If our own Mind is the Buddha, how did Bodhidharma transmit his doctrine when he came from India?

A: When he came from India, he transmitted only Mind-Buddha. He just pointed to the truth that the minds of all of you have from the very first

been identical with the Buddha, and in no way separate from each other. That is why we call him our Patriarch. Whoever has an instant understanding of this truth suddenly transcends the whole hierarchy of saints and adepts belonging to any of the Three Vehicles. You have always been one with the Buddha, so do not pretend you can attain to this oneness by various practices.

Discuss it as you may, how can you even hope to approach the truth through words? Nor can it be perceived either subjectively or objectively. So full understanding can come to you only through an inexpressible mystery. The approach to it is called the Gateway of the Stillness Beyond All Activity. If you wish to understand, know that a sudden comprehension comes when the mind has been purged of all the clutter of conceptual and discriminatory thought-activity. Those who seek the truth by means of intellect and learning only get further and further away from it.

Were you now to practice keeping your minds motionless at all times, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying; concentrating entirely upon the goal of no thought-creation, no duality, no reliance on others and no attachments; just allowing all things to take their course the whole day long, as though you were too ill to bother; unknown to the world; innocent of any urge to be known or unknown to others; with your minds like blocks of stone that mend no holes—then all the Dharmas would penetrate your understanding through and through. In a little while you would find yourselves firmly unattached. Thus, for the first time in your lives, you would discover your reactions to phenomena decreasing and, ultimately, you would pass beyond the Triple World; and people would say that a Buddha had appeared in the world. Pure and passionless knowledge implies putting an end to the ceaseless flow of thoughts and images, for in that way you stop creating the karma that leads to rebirth—whether as gods or men or as sufferers in hell.

The Void is fundamentally without spatial dimensions, passions, activities, delusions or right understanding. You must clearly understand that in it there are no things, no men and no Buddhas; for this Void contains not the smallest hairsbreadth of anything that can be viewed spatially; it depends on nothing and is attached to nothing. It is all-pervading, spotless beauty; it is the self-existent and uncreated Absolute. A perception, sudden as blinking, that subject and object are one, will lead to a deeply mysterious wordless understanding; and by this understanding will you awake to the truth of Zen.

—Translation by John Blofeld

Lin-chi (died 866)

Lin-chi Record (excerpts)

Lin-chi (Japanese: Rinzai) was one of the most famous Chinese Masters, and his Rinzai tradition of sudden enlightenment is still a major force in East Asian Zen. He was born, probably between 810 and 815, in the western part of Shantung, just south of the Yellow River. It is not known when he became a monk, probably in his teens as was customary at the time. According to his own records, after he had spent some time studying the sutras and monastic regulations, he grew dissatisfied and turned to Zen. Following a period of initial training, he went on pilgrimage to find a Master, settling at Mount Huang Po in Kiangsi. The story that he relates of his enlightenment is a classic, and after this dramatic confrontation Lin-chi became a member of the fourth generation of succession from Hui-neng. He then traveled through China visiting Zen centers before settling in Chen-chou, in northern China, where he lived in a small riverside temple named Lin-chi-yuan, from which his most famous Zen name derives.

Lin-chi's teachings, like the man, are direct, powerful, and straightforward. One of his most celebrated remarks, about killing the Buddha, may seem extremely iconoclastic, but it follows directly upon his teacher Huang-po's comment about not attaching oneself to anything, even the Buddha. Instead, Lin-chi stresses that no extra effort has to be made, for this effort itself can become an attachment. How then should one proceed in one's training, if striving itself may be a mistake? Here is the crux of the matter, and many of Lin-chi's teachings are geared toward helping his followers come to their own understanding that they must let go—even after taking a step forward—and break through their illusions, including those brought on by words. Because of his varied and dynamic teaching methods, Lin-chi has often been portrayed in Zen paintings, sometimes shouting, sometimes holding a stick, and sometimes glowering with a clenched fist.

The following excerpts are taken from talks to his monk followers and from the record of his pilgrimages, collectively known as the Lin-chi Record. In these excerpts, we can see the teacher in several guises, asking questions of his